

Canova-deMedicis House
46 Bridge Street
St. Augustine
St. Johns County
Florida

HABS No. FLA-127

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

CANOVA-deMEDICIS HOUSE

Address: 46 Bridge Street, St. Augustine, St. Johns County,
Florida.

Present Owner: Kenneth W. Dow; 250 St. George Street, St.
Augustine, Florida; and Cove Hill, 2 South Street,
Rockport, Massachusetts.

Present Occupant: Vacant.

Present Use: Storage.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History: It has been thus far impossible to assign a date for the erection of this building. In 1866, Antonio Canova conveyed the property to his son Ramon for "\$1.00 and love and affection" (St. Johns County Records, Deed BK "Q", p. 422) but it is not stated that a house was on the property. Ramon owned the property until 1878. Antonio Canova had been born on the Island of Minorca and the Canova family were part of the Minorcan colony of New Smyrna and St. Augustine. The style and plan of the house suggest that it was built either just prior to or during the Canova period.

1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1821 Antonio Canova
(St. Johns County Records, Deed Book "A," p. 104)
- 1866 Ramon Canova
(St. Johns County Records, Deed Book "Q," p. 422)
- 1878 Albert Tracy
(St. Johns County Records, Deed Book "X," p. 258)
- 1886 Amos Spear
(St. Johns County Records Deed Book "FF," p. 378)
- 1892 Julis Spear
(St. Johns County Records Deed Book "YY," p. 234)
- 1897 Mollie Pease
(St. Johns County Records Misc. 1, p. 103)
- 1899 Emanuel Medicis
(St. Johns County Records Misc. 2, p. 123)

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1920 Medicis heirs

1922 John Henry
(St. Johns County Records Deed Book 50, p. 354)

1939 Misses Newhill
(St. Johns County Records Deed Book 119, p. 325)

1946 Kenneth Dow
(St. Johns County Records Deed Book 159, p. 584)

2. Date of erection: Unknown--probably sometime between 1821-45. (Territorial period)
3. Architect, builder: Unknown.
4. Original plans: None known, unlikely of recovery.
5. Notes on alterations and additions: Original house has had few changes. Open loggia or porch on north (rear) with stair probably closed in. Entrance door probably shifted from front (south) to west. Two-story wooden and one-story brick additions on north; two-story wooden porch on west.
6. Important old views: None have been discovered.
7. Sources of information: Chain of ownership has been based on a documented research report made on the Dow properties by Mrs. Elcanor Philips Barnes for Kenneth W. Dow in 1957.

Prepared by Henry C. Edwards, Architect
National Park Service
August 1961

- B. Supplemental Material: The following historical note was originally compiled in December 1938 by Alberta Johnson, Librarian of the Florida Historical Society (located in 1938 in St. Augustine, Florida). This material was given to the Historic American Buildings Survey by the St. Augustine Historical Society on March 24, 1965:

COQUINA HOUSE 46 Bridge Street
(de Medecis House)

Escrituras, Webb Memorial Library

- 1791- Mortgage, May 6, Andres Ximanez, for Antonio Huertas, granted
p. 129 lot #257 for the taxes and mortgages it as security.
- 1815- Title- Governor J.J.Estrada y Toro gives title to Antonio
p. 106V Huertas in lot #257, block 37, for which he gave mortgage
May 6, 1791. Measures north-south 29 yds. east-west 69 yds.
Bounded east by St. George St. West by the swamp, (Maria
Sanchez) north by Nicholas Estefanopoly, south by cross street
- - - leading to the swamp. - - - - -
St. Johns County Archives Deed Book "A-1" p. 104.

- 1821- Dec. 21, Antonio Huertas sells to Antonio Canova, same description as in title of 1815, with all its appurtenances, privileges, titles, etc., purchase price, \$1000.00. This transfer of title does not specify any buildings on this lot, but in comparing purchase price with others of the same period, it is beleived [sic] that the two houses-- this coquina house at 46 Bridge St. and the coquina house on same lot (in 1821) the so-called Prince Murat House [see Antonio Canova House, HABS No. FLA-114] included in the estate of Antonio Canova--had both been built during the second Spanish occupation [1784-1821] and before the sale to Antonio Canova. The lot extending from St. George St. to Cordova St. (marsh at that time) remained in the possession of the Canova family until 1877, when by the 1869 will of Antonio Canova the property was divided and sold, excepting the house #46 Bridge St. this being recorded in
- 1866- Deed Book "Q" p. 422, Sept. 29, 1866, Antonio and Margaret P. Canova for \$1.00 and the natural love and affection for the children of Ramon Canova, deed to Ramon Canova, as trustee for his children Louis, (12) Antonio (5) Leon, about 6 months of age. Measuring 41, ft. east-west, 146 1/2 ft. north-south. (This lot has since been filled in at marsh line and made larger)
- 1878- St. Johns County Archives Deed Book "X" p. 258, Jan. 19, B. F. Oliveros, Commissioner appointed by Probate Court, to Albert Tracy, lot 14, block 36 (Formerly block 37) lot with stone house, bounded south by Bridge St., north by Howard, east by Howard (formerly Canova) west by Maria Sanchez Creek, conveyed by Antonio and Margaret Canova, deed in trust, to Ramon Canova, Sept. 29, 1866
- 1878- Deed Book "X" p. 378
Col. Albert Tracy gives quit claim deed to above property to A.C. Spear who in turn sold to Mollie H. Pease who it is recorded in
- 1899- Deed Book "2" pp. 122-123 deeds to Emanuel E. de Medecis, now measuring 70 ft. on Cordova St. and 137 on Bridge. In 1921 heirs of Emanuel de Medecis deeded this property to John L. Henry, (now Mrs W.H. Taylor) This house is two-storied, the lower of thick walls of coquina, with outside chimney of the spindly type of the Spanish period, upper story of wood. A brick kitchen was added to the house at a later period.

It may be of interest to note that Louis C. Canova et al (Louis, Leon, Antonio J. Canova and Lula Canova Mordt (heirs of Antonio Canova) sold to Henry M. Flagler land that is now part of the Alcazar Hotel grounds described as "beginning at the N.W. corner of Bridge and Putnam or Cordova Streets, west along Bridge St. along the north stone wall therof [sic] where the couseway crosses Maria Sanchez marsh and creek is or was, 100 ft. to center of creek, north 146 ft. along center of creek.

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PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural interest: A good example of a small stone and wooden domestic structure in St. Augustine probably built during the Territorial period (1821-45).
2. Condition of fabric: Neglected - in need of stabilization.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Over-all dimensions: 28'-5" (front) x 26'-4 1/2".
Number of stories: One-and-a-half stories.
Number of bays: Three-bay front by three bays.
Layout: Rectangular (almost square).
2. Foundations: Coquina blocks (Note: "Coquina" is local shellstone quarried on nearby Anastasia Island and used for construction in St. Augustine since 1580 [letter to King from Governor Pedro Menendez Marquez, December 27, 1583]).
3. Wall construction: Lower floor - Coquina blocks laid in roughly horizontal courses, plastered inside and out and scored on exterior to simulate ashlar.
Upper floor - Half walls of wooden studs, 3 x 3, 3'-0" on center, mortised and pegged.
4. Porches: None that can be related to original house; may have had loggia on north (rear); wooden porches above and below later additions on west.
5. Chimneys: One coquina masonry chimney on east elevation. The upper part destroyed.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doors and doorways: All exterior doors replacements at various times; simple masonry openings.
 - b. Windows and shutters: One original nine-over-six-light, double-hung wooden sash in east wall (room 103; see HABS measured drawings, sheet 2); all others two-over-two-light, double-hung wooden sash replacements. Louvered wooden shutters.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof with hexagonal asbestos-cement shingles.
 - b. Eaves: Open eaves, projecting rafters, wooden barge board at gables.

- c. Dormers: Front (south) dormer: shed roof; north dormer: rebuilt with gable roof, shingle sides.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plan: First floor; two front rooms, large rear room with stair.
Second (1/2) floor: Three rooms and stair hall in the northeast corner.
Attic: Unfinished.
2. Stairways: Wooden, single flight stairway with winders, simple square newels, balusters, and elliptical (in section) rail. Evidence that stair was probably originally partly on exterior or within loggia.
3. Flooring: First floor replaced with concrete slab; original condition unknown. 8" wide wooden planks (average) on second floor.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster on wooden lath except on masonry walls. Masonry walls plastered directly. Ceilings--plaster on wooden lath.
5. Doors: No original doors now in place. Three wooden batten doors said by owner to have been removed from the house have been recovered.
6. Trim: Simple unmolded or molded backband wooden trim. One piece of original unmolded trim in place. Mantelpiece is wooden, simple neo-classic carpenter detail. (See HABS measured drawings, sheet No. 5).
7. Hardware: All modern replacements now in house but one batten door (see above) has original lock, bolt and strap hinges.
8. Lighting: Electric.
9. Heating: Fireplace and stoves.

D. Site

1. Orientation: Built directly on north side of Bridge Street. Now part of complex of buildings owned by Mr. Dow. The original site conditions are not evident.
2. Enclosures: Masonry wall at street line to the west of the house and enclosing the garden to the rear.

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